

In The Claims:

1. (currently amended) [[A]] An isolated gene which is selected from a polynucleotide represented by as set forth in SEQ ID NO. 1 or a polynucleotide encoding a γ -butyrobetaine hydroxylase ~~γ -butyrobetaine hydroxylase represented by SEQ ID NO. 2.~~

2. (currently amended) [[A]] An isolated recombinant vector comprising the gene of claim 1.

3. (currently amended) The isolated recombinant vector according to claim 2, which has accession number KCCM-10557.

4. (currently amended) [[A]] An isolated transformed with a recombinant vector comprising the gene of claim 1.

5. (currently amended) The isolated transformant according to claim 4, which is *Escherichia coli*.

6-7. (canceled)

7. (New) A method of preparing L-carnitine, which comprises hydroxylating γ -butyrobetaine using the γ -butyrobetaine hydroxylase from a transformant transformed with a recombinant vector comprising a gene is selected from the group consisting of a polynucleotide as set forth in SEQ ID NO. 1 or a polynucleotide encoding a γ -butyrobetaine hydroxylase as set forth in SEQ ID NO. 2.

8. (New) The method of preparing L-carnitine according to claim 6, wherein the transformant is *Escherichia coli*.

9. (New) The method of preparing L-carnitine according to claim 6, wherein the recombinant vector has accession number KCCM-10557.